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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 008794

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: KING RESHUFFLES CABINET

REF: A. AMMAN 8600

[1](#)B. AMMAN 7862

[1](#)C. AMMAN 7336

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) The long-awaited cabinet reshuffle took place October 24 in line with expectations (ref A). Only three ministers were replaced, while seven other new ministers were added. The new government retains, even sharpens, a division between the reformist wing and conservative East Bankers. Biographical information on all new ministers will follow (septel). End Summary.

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The Highlights  
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[1](#)2. (C) After months of government-fueled speculation, King Abdullah finally swore in a reshuffled cabinet in an evening ceremony October 24. The number of cabinet ministers increased from 21 to 28 as combined ministerial portfolios were separated and two new ministries created. Despite the King's public criticism of the old cabinet's performance, only three ministers resigned, most notably former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry and Trade, Mohammad Halaigra (for non-performance reasons). This modest change probably reflects the King's predilection for avoiding personal confrontation as he left some well-known duds in office, including Minister of Labor Amjad Majali. Asma Khader retained the spokesman role, despite her frequent gaffes. The number of women in the cabinet has increased from three to four. Of the ten new ministers, only one, Foreign Minister Hani al-Mulki, has ever served in a cabinet before.

[1](#)3. (C) A few of the new ministers have had positive interactions with post in the past. Minister of Industry and Trade Ahmad Hindawi has evinced a strong desire for economic cooperation with the United States, but in his preceding job as Director General of the Jordan Institution for Standards and Metrology has not had the ability to deliver. He comes from a family with a strong political background; his father once served as Deputy Prime Minister. Minister of Transport Saud Nsairat demonstrated strong pro-American sympathies and great competence in his former position as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He may have some input in his new post on potential deals with Boeing, but in general his position carries little meaningful authority. Nsairat was most likely granted the appointment as a consolation prize for losing out in recent political maneuverings in the senior ranks of the Jordanian Armed Forces. Minister of Environment Yousef Shureiqi has shown commitment to environmental standards that fit well with our bilateral relationship, including the Free Trade Agreement.

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A Divided House  
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[1](#)4. (C) The new cabinet line-up represents a modest boost for the reform agenda as former Minister of Foreign Affairs Marwan Muasher, a well-known reformer, has been appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs and Government Performance (ref A). Key U.S. partners on reform - Planning Minister Awadallah, Justice Minister Bashir, and Education Minister Touqan - retained their jobs. At the same time, nine of the ten new ministers come from the ranks of conservative East Bank elements. This structure will impede an identifiably weak PM Fayez as he tries to carry out the King's conflicting agendas of reform coupled with a crackdown on opposition, particularly the Islamists. The cabinet again reflects the competition between the main power-brokers of Jordanian politics as GID Director Sa'ad Kheir and Royal Court Minister Samir Rifai call for a hardline approach to opposition, while PM Fayez takes a more conciliatory approach to avoid alienating sectors of Jordanian society. Given the King's strong desire for action from PM Fayez's government and the conflicted nature of the cabinet, we do not expect this government to last long.

[1](#)5. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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HALE